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For information

Summary of mid-term reviews and major evaluations of country programmes

Middle East and North Africa region

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations, specifying, *inter alia*, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustment in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The mid-term reviews and evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 1998.

Introduction

1. In 1998, mid-term reviews (MTRs) were held for the country programmes of Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic. Despite the differences between the two countries, both MTRs drew extensively on a number of studies and evaluations undertaken in preparation for this important exercise.

2. In the two countries, both of which are on course to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children goals, the MTR exercise marks a very important turn in programming approaches. A closer look is being taken at moving from goals (coverage for most children) to rights (coverage of all children), with all it implies in terms of examining the reduction of disparities between provinces, rural and urban settings and boys and girls. A closer look is also being taken at development and protection issues, now that survival issues are well in hand.

3. In preparation for next year's MTRs in the Middle East and North Africa region (in Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the Sudan and Tunisia), the regional

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office is taking stock of the experience gained to date to ensure that preparation for this milestone in assessing the ongoing country programme and preparing the next one is given its due share of attention. In 1999, the regional office is emphasizing the upgrading of monitoring and evaluation skills of country offices and the significance of rights-based programming.

Country mid-term reviews

Egypt

4. The Egypt country programme for 1995-2000 was reviewed in June 1998, after three-and-one-half years of implementation. The MTR exercise was a step-by-step process that started in 1997. Preparations involved a wide variety of partners at both central and regional levels including line ministries, governorates, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies and the donor community. Major evaluations were also begun in 1997. The combined outcomes of these efforts culminated in two days of policy roundtables opened by the First Lady of Egypt. Separate working sessions brought together a full range of partners to give guidance on how to strengthen the country programme to deal more effectively with emerging trends. Child rights and the role of UNICEF in bringing protection rights more into the development discourse were key elements of the review.

5. **The situation of children and women**. Egypt has undergone very rapid change during the 1990s. Structural adjustment, privatization and aspirations to enter fully into the world economy are reflected in new policies. The country is also an active participant in the global revolution in communication. The concern to meet the expectations of youth, for whom some 500,000 new jobs must be created each year, and the demand for improving the quality of the education system set serious challenges. Macro-economic indicators are promising, especially real growth in gross domestic product. Yet the burdens of reform weigh heavily on policy makers and families alike, as they try to cope with this costly new environment.

6. Egypt is on course to achieve the overarching goals of the World Summit for Children by the year 2000. In 1997, infant and under-five mortality rates had declined to 54 and 73 per 1,000 live births, respectively. However, disparities remain high, with rural Upper Egypt scoring lowest on basic indicators. The maternal mortality rate is estimated at 170 per 100,000 live births. The decade goal for the water sector has been achieved, while the environmental sanitation goal of 40 per cent is also likely to be met. The overall nutritional status of children, both boys and girls, is not improving. In 1996, over 24 per cent of children were stunted, with stunting levels especially acute in Upper Egypt. The gap in school enrolment between girls and boys is dropping and overall rates of continuation in school are rising. Net enrolment rates for 1996 stood at 80 per cent for girls and 90 per cent for boys aged 6-10 years. While girls perform well once they enter school, getting into school at all is still difficult for a persistent minority of girls in rural Upper Egypt. It is estimated that about 1.4 million Egyptian children aged 6-14 years participate in the labour force, either as paid labour or as unpaid workers on family farms or businesses. Low access to primary education is often one of the factors contributing to child labour. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) has estimated that 3.5 per cent of children aged 5-15 years have disabilities of some type.

7. **Achievements and constraints**. Vaccination rates for all antigens except two doses of tetanus toxoid vaccine have reached 90 per cent and the country is nearly polio-free. Egypt now purchases all its vaccines supplies and has added vaccination against hepatitis B to its programme. UNICEF has helped the Government to achieve universal salt iodization, to adopt an integrated approach to strengthening the primary health care (PHC) system and to develop a safe motherhood strategy including emergency obstetric care. UNICEF and the World Health Organization have developed a strategy for the Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses, now adopted by the Government as part of its health sector reform. In support of this new approach, the health programme will be restructured and three vertical projects will be regrouped into one child health project. The Ministry of Education gradually has been adopting the pedagogical approach of the UNICEF community school model, which aims to improve the quality of education. The "girl-friendly" school model for hard-to-reach communities is being replicated to reduce the gender gap in education.

8. The water and environmental sanitation (WES) programme has already reached all its objectives, including the ambitious service coverage objectives in four governorates of Upper Egypt. This has contributed to the adoption by the Government of a community-based water supply system and to the development of a master plan for water supply and sanitation. The WES programme will now concentrate on improving the quality of water

and the environment and will focus more generally on information, advocacy and capacity-building. In the area-based programme, the microcredit project for poor rural women, set up in 1993, has gained national recognition as one of a few schemes able to reach the poorest of the poor. It also provides an example of how microcredit, coupled with the provision of basic services, is able to improve the socio-economic status of the very poor.

9. The gender and development programme has supported the National Commission of Women and the Ministry of Planning to mainstream gender in Egypt's five-year plan. It also helped the Government to develop gender-sensitive indicators at national and governorate levels. UNICEF supported alliances with over 100 NGOs to implement six areas of concern voiced at the Fourth World Conference on Women and to write Egypt's alternative report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The communication programme has facilitated the establishment of an NGO coalition to monitor child rights. To help raise public awareness, support has been provided to national television for broadcasting messages on child rights.

10. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR process confirmed the success of the overall strategies, particularly in relation to achieving the end-decade goals. The programme's geographic focus on Upper Egypt was also confirmed. During the first three-and-one-half years of implementation, there has been a marked shift in the country programme from service delivery to advocacy and capacity-building. Increasing priority has been given to pioneering work on small-scale models that have been able to influence policies at the national and local levels. The MTR recognized the role of UNICEF in capacity-building for community-based initiatives that benefit children and women and its efforts to include NGOs and communities as recognized partners.

11. Egypt's strides in achieving the end-decade goals have confirmed that high political commitment is a cornerstone of success. Most evaluations noted that greater lasting impact is ensured when sustainability is better factored into programme design from the outset.

12. The various MTR review sessions identified new trends needing attention, the most prominent of which are: the needs of adolescents beyond those currently defined in the programme; child protection issues; the acceleration of the Government's readiness to work in partnerships with civil society to eliminate female genital mutilation; and various government sector reforms. The MTR also called for stronger linkages at the community level by fully integrating the area-based programme across all programmes. Based on these considerations, the area-based programme will be abolished and its components integrated into the existing health and nutrition, WES and education programmes, as well as into a programme for child protection that will be developed.

13. The review recommended extending the country programme to 2001 to incorporate fully the review of the end-decade goals and to harmonize the country programme with the planning cycles of the Government and the agencies participating in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. The United Nations country team has asked UNICEF to take the lead in the Common Country Assessment exercise.

14. **Country programme management plan**. UNICEF Egypt conducted a programme audit in January 1998 to identify programme management assets and risks. It is yielding improved use of human resources for higher-quality results, better integration of programmes and projects and a strengthened monitoring and evaluation function.

15. In 1994, the Executive Board approved the country programme with an annual general resources ceiling of $5 million. In 1996, available general resources dropped by nearly one half, with a current annual allocation of $2.65 million. In response, the UNICEF office has succeeded in increasing substantially supplementary funds to maintain the main pillars of the programme. Donors today include the United States Agency for International Development, the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, and the European Union. Fiscal responsibility has resulted in the closure of the liaison offices in Alexandria and in Assiut, pending the results of the MTR. If the resource base permits, reopening an office in Upper Egypt, with a strengthened mandate, may be an option.

Syrian Arab Republic

16. The MTR of the country programme of the Syrian Arab Republic tool place in September 1998, the third year of the 1996-2000 programme cycle. Under the coordination of the State Planning Commission, preparations involved consultations with government partners,

both at central and governorate levels, and with other United Nations agencies. Preparation of the MTR saw extensive use of the results of a series of surveys, studies and evaluations conducted by the Government and UNICEF that provided recent national and subnational data on a number of programme-related areas and on emerging issues of interest to UNICEF.

17. **The situation of children and women**. While the growth rate of the Syrian economy is the highest in the region, high annual inflation (20 per cent) and population growth (2.6 per cent) are perhaps the largest threats to the country's ability to combat poverty and improve social conditions. A 1996 Government report stated that 35 per cent of the rural population and 18 per cent of the urban population lived below the indicative poverty level of $360. Government spending on health and education, generally modest, continues to grow although spending for social protection is decreasing. The country has reached most of the goals for the year 2000, but recent surveys have revealed substantial geographical, rural/urban and gender disparities in immunization coverage, access to quality PHC, access to safe water and primary school enrolment and drop-out rates.

18. **Achievements and constraints**. Immunization coverage was maintained at over 90 per cent for all antigens but continued financing of vaccines by the Government remains a challenge. The new "healthy village" programme, covering 35 villages identified as high risk in rural and peri-urban areas, has shown good preliminary results. Coverage of immunization and maternal and child health care increased. Self-reliance among communities and links between communities and schools were fostered and inter-agency cooperation was consolidated.

19. Education authorities, teachers, students and their parents reacted very positively to the Global Education Initiative introduced by UNICEF on a pilot basis in 1996. This new approach to classroom teaching and learning has earned a place in the country's reform of the quality of primary education. Support to women's literacy activities increasingly is focusing on teaching life skills to adolescent girls. In order to reach more children, the focus in early childhood and development has been shifted from provision of supplies to kindergartens to activities focused on the Better Parenting Initiative. The country submitted its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1995 and in response to the concluding observations, the Syrian national committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child has commissioned a series of child-rights related studies that will be discussed at national seminars. Key developments in the promotion of children rights included incorporation of the Convention into the curricula of primary schools and law faculties. In an unprecedented move, the Ministry of Justice designated and trained one judge per governorate as focal point for juvenile-related issues. UNICEF, in cooperation with Syrian television and Dourade Lahham, the regionally renowned actor and special ambassador for Syrian children, produced a series of television dramas on critical child rights issues.

20. Major constraints that affected programme implementation included a shortfall in planned funding levels, centralized decision-making, lack of transportation for field visits by government counterparts and rapid turnover and lack of appropriate relevant knowledge among PHC staff. In particular, this has affected progress in the health programmes components for oral rehydration therapy, growth monitoring and promotion and prenatal and antenatal care.

21. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. While confirming that sustaining the achievements made towards the decade goals will continue as the main thrust of the country programme, the MTR recommended that interventions should be better focused and targeted to avoid dispersion of human and financial resources. Therefore, strategic priority will be given to reduction of disparities identified by the surveys described in paragraph 16 above. The collection of more comprehensive disaggregated data will support better planning, monitoring and evaluation of such interventions. To increase sustainability of the goals achieved, the supply component will be reduced in favour of capacity-building and empowerment.

22. The health programme will focus on disparity reduction for all health-related decade goals and on such emerging issues as AIDS and adolescent health. Since neonatal deaths are a significant cause of under-five mortality, strengthening relevant components of interventions for safe motherhood (antenatal and post-natal care) and nutrition (low birth weight, adolescent and maternal nutrition) will receive high priority. The education programme will continue to prioritize early childhood development through a strategy for sharing information on better parenting information; quality reform of primary education through the Global Education Initiative approach; and a targeted outreach to young and adolescent girls (under 18 years) and unreached children such

as girl drop-outs and rural children. During the expansion phase of the "healthy village" programme, UNICEF will focus entirely on underserved districts of governorates with the largest disparities. Communication activities will be strengthened and streamlined in order to make use of the full potential resulting from the many media outlets in the country.

23. **Country programme management plan**. In 1998, the UNICEF office was upgraded to a full country office, with the addition of an International Professional post. This change, the result of the country's complex programming environment, will help to manage the shift in programme direction, which will require more emphasis on advocacy, capacity-building and community empowerment. The staff are becoming accustomed to the new profile and the remainder of the programme cycle will be needed to establish firmly the new office structure. The country team sees the MTR as the first stage in the preparation of the new country programme, and is taking into account, *inter alia*, the prevailing funding situation that will require a qualitative shift in programming skills. The approved annual general resources ceiling of $1 million was reduced to $850,000 in 1996 and only $5,400 were received in supplementary funding. The positive effects of the office's upgrading are already showing in terms of programming quality (finer analysis and more targeted interventions), leading to a heightened interest by a number of donors and private sector companies.

Major country programme evaluations

24. Because most countries in the region have achieved the decade goals, it is time to address disparities between provinces, rural and urban areas and boys and girls, to ensure transition from goals (coverage of most children) to rights (coverage of all children). In the same vein, as child survival ceases to be the main concern in the region, protection, development and other issues are emerging, including child labour, child abuse, gender disparity, poverty and AIDS, all of which are sensitive issues for the region. They will require a shift in the UNICEF programming approach to reach the unreached, fine tune assessment methods and focus more on advocacy and acquiring new skills (both by UNICEF and counterparts).

25. In 1998, a total of 43 studies and 25 evaluations were conducted in the region. Those described below represent examples of the innovative work being undertaken in the region and highlight the new areas of intervention for UNICEF in a number of countries. These include collection of disaggregated data and attention to such topics as gender audit and a communication strategy for AIDS. A number of evaluations also look into the effectiveness of community participation. Lessons learned are not only useful to the countries and offices concerned but also represent useful methodological tools for other countries, both in and outside the region.

Mass media and interpersonal communication in HIV/AIDS prevention - Egypt

26. A pilot project on youth protection was supported by UNICEF and implemented by the Centre for Communication, Training, Documentation and Production of Cairo University between August 1996 and September 1997. The project's objectives were to: (a) gain current, in-depth information on relevant knowledge, attitudes and practices related to HIV/AIDS and identify risk factors among youth as a key population group; (b) develop key prevention messages suitable for youth; (c) disseminate essential prevention messages among one particular youth group, e.g., Cairo University students, who may further disseminate information gained; and (d) develop a model that can be replicated by other universities in Egypt.

27. Implementation began with baseline data collection (through surveys and focus group discussions) to assess knowledge, attitudes and practices among the target population and identify appropriate intervention techniques and message strategies. Small groups of university students from 10 different faculties were then trained in interpersonal communications skills related to HIV/AIDS and on relevant prevention measures. Ten student rallies were organized to convey essential messages. Impact evaluation was conducted through pre- and post-rally interviews with samples of 20 randomly selected students.

28. The main findings of the study highlighted: (a) the existence of misconceptions and lack of essential knowledge among university students on HIV/AIDS, including means of protection from infection; (b) a significant number of Egyptian youths are engaging in high-risk behaviours; and (c) such well-organized, face-to-face activities as the youth rallies can be an effective means of conveying socially sensitive health messages related to HIV/AIDS among university students.

29. The study recommended that the methodology be replicated in other universities and among other youth groups and that linkages between the mass media and interpersonal communications be identified and strengthened. In addition to being a good planning tool for the development of a more ambitious AIDS prevention programme among university students in Egypt, this model could prove to be a powerful tool to advocate with other Governments in the region for the explicit tackling of AIDS prevention among specific at-risk target groups.

Gender audit - West Bank and Gaza

30. A gender audit was conducted to assess the extent to which the UNICEF global commitment to addressing gender concerns was reflected in UNICEF-assisted projects at field level. Contributing partners included high-level officials from the Palestinian Authority's ministries of planning and international cooperation, education, PHC and public health; other United Nations agencies; and Swiss Development Cooperation. The audit constitutes a "best practice" initiative because of its impact on refocusing UNICEF programmes, improving gender sensitivity within the office and promoting awareness of gender concerns among United Nations and other government counterparts.

31. The audit focussed on whether and how gender considerations were taken into account in the design, implementation and monitoring of four selected projects representing a cross-section of UNICEF cooperation in the West Bank and Gaza. The Women's Equality and Empowerment Framework developed by UNICEF provided the broad conceptual basis for the design of the gender audit. Methodologies included a review of project documentation, structured interviews and informal discussions with UNICEF staff and government and NGO counterparts.

32. Results indicate that substantial challenges remain in promoting gender awareness and incorporating gender-sensitive approaches into UNICEF-assisted programmes. Widespread lack of understanding of gender concepts was found among all partners including government counterparts, international experts and UNICEF staff. Project documents did not accurately or completely identify areas to target for the elimination of gender disparities. Nor did monitoring and evaluation systems allow adequate analysis of women's involvement in project activities. The education project did provide data disaggregated by gender, but it too failed systematically to integrate gender considerations into project design and implementation.

33. The gender audit recommended that a gender mainstreaming strategy be clearly developed by senior project management in coordination with the concerned parties and incorporated into all project documents. Gender sensitivity training should be provided to officials of the Ministry of Social Affairs who serve as the principal government partners in the Better Parenting Initiative project. Moreover, technical expertise should be provided for the Education Management Information System project to ensure that a gender dimension is included in all planning, research and development activities and that data generated by the system be analyzed systematically from a gender perspective.

"Progress of Provinces" - Islamic Republic of Iran

34. A MICS carried out from September 1997 to January 1998 by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in collaboration with UNICEF measured progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children and more importantly provided guidance for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The MICS report focused on the "unreached" population. Data for the MICS were collected in November 1997 from a total of 57,000 households selected on the basis of a random cluster sampling method. The sample size ensured statistical validity of data, disaggregated by gender and by urban/rural settings, at subnational level.

35. The outcome provided a solid base for an innovative presentation of results. The separation of the report into two sections, showing results by indicators and by provinces, allowed the reader to see at a glance achievements as well as disparities between and within provinces. In addition to ranking the provinces, performance indicators measured deprivation in rural areas and bias against women. This helped to focus attention on unfinished tasks to achieve universal rights of children and women as stipulated in the two Conventions. The "Progress of Provinces" represents a milestone in the development of disparity-reduction strategies and was used as one of the bases to develop the new programme of cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and UNICEF. More countries in the region have started to adopt this approach to highlight disparities.

Child well-being in Egypt: policy implications from Egypt's MICS

36. The MICS conducted in Egypt in 1996-1997 attempted to expand the notion of children's well-being beyond health indicators to include child labour, disabilities, educational exclusion and access to water and sanitation. The MICS examined conditions in unplanned settlements and provided separate, more detailed estimates for the six governorates where UNICEF collaborates with the Government in area-based programmes.

37. The MICS emphasized "invisible" children - those in need of special protection, never enrolled in school and living in the "illegal" neighbourhoods of Egypt's burgeoning cities. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood helped to promote investigation of these difficult areas and encourage assessments leading to concrete actions. The Egyptian MICS thus went beyond the standard measurement of progress towards goals for children and used the framework of the Convention of the Rights of the Child as a guide to assess children's well-being and attract policy attention.

38. The crisp policy focus of the MICS came from the active involvement of programme managers and specialists in the planning and interpretation of the survey. A forum organized by the Social Research Centre of the American University in Cairo drew together a number of specialists to examine the results of the survey and discuss policy implications. This contributed substantially to the MTR described in paras. 4-15 above.

39. Programmatic issues arising from the MICS included the need to address spatial disparities, especially in immunization, education and safe sanitation; promotion of girls' education, particularly in rural hamlets and "illegal" urban settlements; a plan of action to address the multiple causes of undernutrition; attention to the plight of working children, including improved working conditions and safeguarding their right to education; quality training for physicians in the proper management of the sick child; and recognition of childhood disabilities as a national issue warranting policy attention. The survey design expressly foresaw its use for repeated monitoring, incorporating statistical parameters that would make this possible, thus making it a valuable vehicle for assessing progress.

Area-based programme - Yemen

40. The area-based programme in Yemen was designed to experiment community approaches to integrated development. The principal partner of UNICEF is the Ministry of Local Administration. Implementation began in late 1995 and at the time of the evaluation, in August 1998, a total of 34 village clusters (*uzla*) were covered, with an estimated population of 400,000. The emphasis is on convergence of services including PHC, water and sanitation, basic education and involvement of local communities to ensure sustainable development.

41. PHC activities aimed at revitalizing village health services through introduction of Bamako Initiative principles. Water and sanitation activities focused on introduction of hand-pumps, rainwater collectors and mechanized water schemes managed by elected community committees and maintained through the collection of user fees. The basic education component aimed at removing barriers to girls' education by improving the school environment through construction of classrooms, provision of furniture and supplies and training of female teachers.

42. The evaluation, funded by the World Bank, was to measure effectiveness through comparison of service delivery in project and non-project villages. Methodologies included direct observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with beneficiaries. Formal interviews were also conducted with national and local officials. Project achievements, cost-effectiveness and processes of service delivery were assessed and analyzed.

43. The evaluation showed unambiguously the improvement in access to and quality of services as a result of project interventions. PHC services were effectively strengthened through revitalization of health units, many of which had closed down. Provision of safe drinking water has met one of the most urgent needs of rural communities, whose participation contributed to the sustainability of the efforts. The programme has been less successful in improving sanitation. However, despite notable improvements in the schooling environment, girls' enrolment remained low. In health, water and education, the cost of services per beneficiary was very modest, so that the experimented approach can be considered cost-effective. Furthermore, cost-recovery schemes in health and water were shown to contribute very significantly to the sustainability of the interventions.

44. The recommendations highlighted the need to develop further the behavioural change component of the sanitation project and to work on increasing awareness of the benefits of girls' education. In order to strengthen regular programme monitoring and follow-up, an interministerial committee was established, which should also ensure that necessary budgetary provisions are made for districts. Lessons learned have been used to develop the next phase of the Yemen country programme and to expand the area-based approach.

Community Child Care Units - Iraq

45. The Government of Iraq, in cooperation with UNICEF, established a nationwide programme to develop Community Child Care Units (CCCUs) in 1996. The programme arose in response to sharply deteriorating nutrition conditions following the imposition of sanctions.

46. Most of the CCCUs are located in schools, with primarily female teachers working as volunteers, with support from members of local organizations and people's local councils. PHC staff are responsible for training and supervision. UNICEF support includes: (a) provision of equipment and supplies; (b) support for training and supervision of about 4,000 CCCU volunteers and health staff at central and governorate level; and (c) the establishment of an information system.

47. An assessment carried out in July-August 1998 by the Ministry of Health through its Preventive Health Department aimed to identify achievements and constraints, with results intended to feed into improved implementation and expansion of the programme. Other important elements of the review covered the capacity of the CCCU programme to handle an increased workload and the identification of further support needed to ensure progress. Two questionnaires were used to gather information. The Nutrition Research Institute and UNICEF provided supervision while the Institute also managed data editing, entry, analysis and reporting.

48. Results of the assessment indicated a dynamic increase in the number of CCCUs established, from 100 in 1996 to 800 in 1997 to 1,333 in 1998. Seventy- three per cent of CCCUs were located in schools and almost 66 per cent of the directors were teachers, indicating the beneficial intersectoral linkages established between health and education and the cost-effective use made of existing infrastructure. About 80 per cent of the CCCUs opened two days a week for a total of 4-8 hours a week. The CCCUs proved effective in: (a) registration, screening, growth monitoring, referral and follow-up of malnourished children; (b) education of mothers; and (c) mobilization of community support. The CCCUs had screened 650,000 children, 250,000 of whom were found to be malnourished.

49. Recommendations arising from the assessment focused on the need to reinforce the training and supervision components and the provision of transport, increased supplies and incentives to volunteers. For more effective community mobilization, it was recommended that CCCUs take advantage of other social mobilization events such as Breast-feeding Week and immunization and environmental campaigns to raise awareness about nutrition-related issues. The assessment also pointed to the need for strengthened nutritional surveillance, data collection and analysis. Increased capacity to analyze and influence nutritional behaviours at local level was particularly called for. The review proved that at very little additional cost, a system can be set up to handle an effective service delivery in an emergency situation. Information collected from this assessment provides a valuable baseline against which future progress can be monitored.

Conclusion

50. In the context of heightened attention to assessment and evaluation of UNICEF-assisted programmes, it is important to highlight the application of evaluation findings to programme activities. A focus on disparity-reduction strategies in pursuit of satisfaction of children's rights has been clearly demonstrated in the uses made of the MICS in Egypt and the Islamic Republic if Iran, where disaggregated data were key. Reduction of gender disparity was also clearly targeted in the gender audit of West Bank and Gaza, where greater efforts to enhance gender sensitivity and build capacity in gender planning emerged as key programme priorities.

51. The assessment of the area-based programme in Yemen pointed to new areas of learning, which may be applied as the programme is replicated and expanded. Cost-effectiveness, community participation, intersectoral collaboration and sustainability are other issues of prime concern, as was apparent in the CCCU assessment in Iraq and the Yemen area-based programme. New dimensions in communication strategies emerged for policy consideration through the youth protection project in Egypt.